AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 1,~~A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

    presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;

    presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not expired;

    deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration count; and

    repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.

3. (original) The method of Claim 2, wherein the randomly-selected expiration count comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active display segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to one of the plurality of expiration counts.

4. (original) The method of Claim 3, wherein the plurality of expiration counts comprises a unique expiration count for each of the active display segments, and wherein deactivating the active display segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.

5. (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 2,~~A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

    presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration count;

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated; and

wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least partly influenced by a wager input.

6.   (canceled)

7.   (currently amended) The method of Claim 6~~5~~, further comprising randomly selecting award amounts from a table of alternative award amounts, wherein randomly selecting award amounts comprises selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

8.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 1,~~A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration time duration; and

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.

9.   (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is at least partly influenced by a wager input.

10.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~8, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active display segments.

11.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~2, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active display segments.

12.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~8, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of alternative expiration parameters.

13.   (original) The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

14.   (original) The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

15.   (original) The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative expiration parameters for each of the active display segments.

16.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~8, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative expiration parameter option.

17.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~18~~8, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative expiration parameter option.

18.   (canceled)

19.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 18,~~A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

        presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;

        presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not expired;

        deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter;

        identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active display segments; and

        repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated; and

        wherein identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

20.   (original) The method of Claim 19, further comprising facilitating participant association between particular active display segments and a corresponding randomly-selected expiration parameter.

21.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~18~~19, wherein identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

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22.   (original) The method of Claim 21, further comprising individually associating a plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active display segments.

23.   (original) The method of Claim 21, further comprising associating one randomly-selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active display segments.

24.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~2, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be presented in each of the active display segments.

25.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 1,~~ A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:
        presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;
        presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not expired;
        deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration; and
        repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.

26.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~1~~2, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments and deactivating the active display segments that have expired until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated comprises repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments and deactivating the active display segments that have expired until all of the active display segments have been deactivated.

27.   (original) A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not
expired;

deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to each
of the active display segments' presentation of symbols a number of times corresponding to a
respective expiration count value; and

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and
deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until all of the active display
segments have been deactivated.

28.   (original) A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least
a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus
comprising:

a video screen to present a display grid having a plurality of display cells;

a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode
of operation; and

a processor configured to designate a plurality of the display cells as active
display cells in response to a predetermined symbol combination occurring during the
standard mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present
symbols in the active display cells, deactivate the active display cells that presented symbols
a number of times corresponding to a randomly-selected expiration count, and to repeat the
random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the display cells that reached the
randomly-selected expiration count until all of the active display cells have been deactivated.

29.   (canceled)

30.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 29,~~ A method for facilitating
participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel
segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least
one randomly-selected expiration parameter wherein the randomly-selected expiration
parameter comprises an expiration count; and

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and
deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the
active reel segments have been deactivated.

31.   (original) The method of Claim 30, wherein the randomly-selected expiration
count comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active reel
segments comprises deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to
one of the plurality of expiration counts.

32.   (original) The method of Claim 31, wherein the plurality of expiration counts
comprises a unique expiration count for each of the active reel segments, and wherein
deactivating the active reel segments comprises deactivating the active reel segments that
have expired in response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.

33.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 30,~~A method for facilitating
participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel
segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least
one randomly-selected expiration parameter, wherein the randomly-selected expiration
parameter comprises an expiration count;

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and
deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the
active reel segments have been deactivated; and

wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least partly influenced by a
wager input.

34.   (canceled)

35.   (currently amended) The method of Claim 3433, further comprising randomly selecting award amounts from a table of alternative award amounts, wherein randomly selecting award amounts comprises selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

36.   (currently amended) The method of Claim 29, A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

        presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments;

        presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;

        deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration time duration; and

        repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

37.   (original) The method of Claim 36, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is at least partly influenced by a wager input.

38.   (currently amended) The method of Claim 2036, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active reel segments.

39.   (currently amended) The method of Claim 2930, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active reel segments.

40.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~36, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of alternative expiration parameters.

41.   (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

42.   (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

43.   (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative expiration parameters for each of the active reel segments.

44.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~36, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative expiration parameter option.

45.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~36, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative expiration parameter option.

46.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~36, further comprising identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active reel segments.

47.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 46,~~A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter;

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated;

identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active reel segments; and

wherein identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

48.   (original) The method of Claim 47, further comprising facilitating participant association between particular active reel segments and a corresponding randomly-selected expiration parameter.

49.   (original) The method of Claim 46, wherein identifying the randomly-selected expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

50.   (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising individually associating a plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active reel segments.

51.   (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising associating one randomly-selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active reel segments.

52.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~30, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be presented in each of the active reel segments.

53.   (currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 29,~~ A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:

presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments;

presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;

deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least one randomly-selected expiration parameter wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration; and

repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

54.   (currently amended) The method of Claim ~~29~~30, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated comprises repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.